

Testimony in Support of SB284

On behalf of the SUN team at IRIS - Integrated refugee and Immigrant Services

3/9/2022

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Camille Kritzman. I am a case manager at IRIS - Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services in New Haven, CT. The clients that I work with consist of undocumented residents, asylum seekers, and legal permanent residents, most of whom are ineligible for Husky coverage.

On behalf of IRIS, I testify in support of SB 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS, it's an important step to include healthcare access to vulnerable children across the state. Additionally, we support modifying SB956 to include ALL CT residents that qualify under the full current HUSKY eligibility.

In 2014, Connecticut immigrants contributed an estimated 1.8 billion dollars in state and local taxes, and 3.3 billion in federal taxes¹. Undocumented immigrants alone pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year², taxes that are then appropriated to fund Connecticut's HUSKY program. Yet, my clients who have been paying into this system for years cannot access health coverage due to HUSKY's limiting eligibility rules for immigrants. This is a public health crisis, especially during a pandemic. Unable to access primary care, when health issues arise that are too urgent to ignore, most of my clients get a ride to the emergency room. This causes an unnecessary strain of the time, resources, and effectiveness of emergency services. According to a Yale study published February 15, 2020³, providing medical coverage for all CT residents would be more cost effective to the state and prevent thousands of deaths. SB 284 would begin to address this public health issue and takes the strain off of emergency services in our state.

The majority of the clients I work for are uninsured. Most of my clients have thousands of dollars in medical bills, and many have chronic medical needs that have gone untreated due to lack of insurance. It's completely heart shattering to work with families who must decide between healthcare for their kids, or meeting their basic needs like food or rent. No family in CT should have to suffer in this way, regardless of immigration status.

As part of my role as lead case manager for the SUN team, (Services for Undocumented Neighbors), I also field questions from other service providers around the state who work with undocumented children. Frequently, I am asked to help in enrolling children they are serving to HUSKY. These service providers range from government DCF workers, hospital and school staff. I inform them that since the child does not have a social security number, they are ineligible for HUSKY. I am usually met with a reaction of

¹ "The Contributions of New Americans in Connecticut." New American Economy Research Fund, n.d. <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-connecticut/>

² "The Contributions of New Americans in Connecticut." New American Economy Research Fund, n.d. <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-connecticut/>

³ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)33019-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33019-3/fulltext)

surprise, confusion, and then despair from both government workers and school and hospital social workers alike. It seems so ludicrous that children who are residents of this state would be left out of a program that would ensure their fundamental human rights.

My clients pay state taxes every year that directly contribute to funding services such as HUSKY, that they will never have access to. They do so in hopes to obtain immigration status one day, and know that in order to do so they need to have a long record of paying taxes and contributing to CT society. In this way, undocumented immigrants in this state are subsidizing healthcare services that they are prohibited from accessing.

At IRIS it is our goal is to support immigrant families and displaced people who have made Connecticut their home, to meet their basic needs and thrive in their communities. It's impossible for our clients to reach this goal without access to healthcare. This is why we stand in support of S.B. No 284, and hope that healthcare in CT can be expanded to include ALL residents of CT regardless of age and immigration status.

Thank you for your time and implore the committee to vote favorably.

Camille Kritzman

Case manager at Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services